

Bureau Rats

Season 2

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Bureau Rats

Season 2

Episode 1

Scene 1

Katia and Tommy are at an affordable and surprisingly decent hotel a few miles from the extortion-funded prison that holds Kai E. Rupps, aka White Hat. They're getting ready to go on the rescue mission for White Hat.

Tommy: It all sounds so easy on paper.

Katia: There will be a curve ball. There always is.

Cobra: I'm doing most of the difficult stuff. It should be easy for you two. Well, the actual prison break, anyway.

Katia: What do you mean by that?

Cobra: Well, you'll have to make a life and remain invisible for the rest of your lives.

Tommy: I thought you said you could erase the surveillance feeds?

Cobra: I can and will, but they'll still hunt Kai. You'll be fine, though, Tommy. Don't worry.

Tommy (frown): Very comforting.

Katia: What about our identity cards? You have all that changed in BORE's systems?

Cobra: Yes, but Kai will still be physically the same and can be identified by sight.

Tommy and Katia start looking through their backpacks to double-check everything.

Katia: Gloves, flashlights, ghost phones, pliers, passports, flask...

Cobra: Flask? I didn't tell you to get a flask.

Katia: I added it to the list.

Tommy: I have the cars and license plates ready. Cobra, you have all the information matching in the BORE, right?

Cobra: Should be fine.

Tommy: Not the confident answer I was hoping for.

Cobra: I can help steer them away from you. Don't worry. Are you two ready? It's almost midnight.

Tommy and Katia look at each other for a moment, then nod slowly in affirmation.

Katia: Yeah, let's do this.

Scene 2

Twenty minutes later, Katia and Tommy are just shy of the prison entrance. They're on a desolate two lane highway. Tommy is driving them in a fairly new Honda Civic, which is more comfortable than expected, but slightly lacking in the punch he was hoping for.

Tommy: I'm starting to think this is not a good car for a getaway after a prison break.

Katia: A little late now.

Tommy: Cobra, we're almost there. Why are the lights still on?

Cobra: I'm working on it.

Tommy: Work faster.

Cobra: The drone just arrived and is sedating the staff. They should be out for at least 20 minutes.

Katia: That's it?

The glow from the prison complex suddenly vanishes.

Tommy: That's our cue.

Tommy accelerates into the main entrance and makes a hard left.

Cobra: Wrong way.

Tommy: What? You're the one giving the directions on the phone!

Cobra: You have it upside down.

Tommy flips phone over, sighs deeply, makes hasty u-turn.

Cobra: Another thousand feet, stop and get out of the car.

A bullet hits just shy of the Honda. Tommy and Katia scream.

Tommy: I thought you had them sedated!

Cobra: I guess I missed one. Sorry.

Another bullet hits the pavement.

Tommy: I'm not getting out of the car yet!

Cobra: Ok...hold on....ok, he's down.

Katia and Tommy get out of the car and race towards a gate at the first security barrier. Tommy tries to open the gate, but it's still locked.

Tommy: Gate's still locked, Cobra.

Cobra: Be patient.

Katia: There are times to be patient, but in the midst of a prison break is not one of them.

Cobra: I disagree.

Tommy (sweaty, annoyed): Maybe not the time for this discussion.

The gate clicks.

Cobra: Try it again.

Tommy opens the gate and they rush towards the next barrier.

Cobra: The next one is a little trickier.

Katia: I thought you had all this worked out.

Cobra: In theory.

Katia: What's tricky about it?

Cobra: It's biometric. I'll have to fool the door into thinking that your fingerprint is actually the security guard's. Go ahead and put your thumb on the reader, Tommy.

Tommy: Wouldn't it be easier if we just put the security guard's thumb on it?

Cobra: Did you look at him?

Tommy and Katia look around and see an overweight security guard passed out on the ground.

Tommy: He's gotta weigh well over 300 pounds.

Cobra: You can try and drag him if you think that's easier. I think I've almost got it anyway.

Katia: We'll wait. It's fine.

Cobra: There, got it! Give it a try.

Tommy opens the door and they see two more security guards on the floor.

Cobra: Go to the desk and get the key for cell 33X.

Katia and Tommy open a large desk drawer and search frantically for key 33X.

Katia: Got it!

Tommy: Let's move.

Cobra: Turn right down the corridor, then take the stairs up to the third floor.
Tommy and Katia start running.

Tommy: How are we doing on time?

Cobra: Thirteen minutes left.

After running up the stairs and making a couple of turns, they come to cell 33X. A prisoner stares out at them with desperate and curious eyes.

Katia: That's not Kai.

Prisoner: No, I'm not Kai.

Tommy: Care to explain, Cobra?

Cobra: Hmmm, I can theorize.

Katia (to prisoner): Do you know where Kai is?

Prisoner: Maybe. If you know how to open that door.

Katia: What are you in for?

Prisoner: Tax evasion.

Tommy: He doesn't know where Kai is. He's just desperate.

Cobra: Perhaps they changed his cell today and haven't updated the systems yet.

Katia: So how do we find him?

Cobra: You have less than ten minutes. I'm flying the drone around and trying to find him. You two should walk around and start looking.

Tommy: Let's split up, that way we can cover twice the ground.

Katia and Tommy split up, start walking down corridors, and calling out Kai's name. After a couple minutes, Cobra announces that it's found Kai.

Cobra: I got him! Go get the key for 101K.

Katia and Tommy race back to the desk, grab the key for 101K, and then sprint to 101K on the first floor.

Katia: Kai! Wake up!

Kai (groggy, peers out of his cell): Katia? Tommy?

Tommy gets the door open. Kai jumps up and runs to Katia.

Katia: Come on!

Kai: What, no romantic prison break kiss?

Cobra: You have less than five minutes.

They get out of the building and through the outer security barrier. They approach the Honda Civic.

Kai: You brought a Honda Civic to a high security prison break?

Katia: All the trouble we go through to set you free, and all you can do is complain about the getaway car?

Cobra: A couple of the guards are starting to wake up.

They get in the Honda and speed away.

Tommy: Aw, crap! I still have the cell key in my pocket!

Kai: Keep it as a souvenir.

Tommy: Guess I don't have much choice.

Kai: So what's the plan?

Katia: We run far away and start a new life.

Tommy: And I go back to my old life and hope that Cobra did a thorough enough job of covering our tracks. We have another car with clean plates not far from here. We'll split up there.

Kai: Cobra, were you able to conceal my financial records?

Cobra: Your funds are secure, but I can't change the bank's internal records. It's outside of BORE's systems. All I could do is hide your assets from BORE.

Kai: So I'll have to cash out.

Katia (confused): What are you talking about?

Kai: My retirement funds. BORE didn't get to them, but I can't do any electronic transactions in my name or change my name at the financial institution. So if I want my retirement money, I'll have to cash out in person.

Tommy: That could be a problem.

Katia: We can start over. It's not worth the risk.

Kai: I have over a million dollars in that account.

Katia: Maybe it is worth the risk. Where is the account?

Kai: Andorra.

Katia: Where the hell is that?

Kai: Between France and Spain.

Tommy: I hear the Pyrenees are lovely this time of year.

Kai: Cobra, I'm gonna need your help.

Cobra: I'll consider it. But first, let's finish this prison break, ok?

Tommy floors it and the Honda speeds toward the future.

Kai: This thing is faster than it looks.

Episode 2

Scene 1

At the Justice And Labor In Prisons Organization (JALIPO) of The Bureau Of Regulating Everything (BORE) government complex, Commissioner Roman Hounds is having a holo-conversation with Warden Jake Koff. Jake Koff has just informed Commissioner Hounds of Kai E. Rupps escape from prison.

Roman Hounds: You're joking.

Jake Koff: I would never joke about a maximum security prison break. (pause) Perhaps a minimum security prison, but never maximum.

Roman Hounds: Has the Fraternal League Of Police been notified?

Jake Koff: Yes, the FLOP has been notified and they are organizing a manhunt.

Roman Hounds: I always love that word, manhunt. It's so primal. And here I am, sitting in this mundane office with a poorly organized desk. (frowns) Jake Off, what do we know about the escape? Are there surveillance records?

Jake Koff: No, sir. Power was down the whole time.

Roman Hounds: And what about the guards?

Jake Koff: They were somehow knocked out with aerosolized sedatives. One guard reported seeing a drone deliver the sedatives, but he's not so bright, so I have doubts.

Roman Hounds: Noted. And the biometric locks at the gates?

Jake Koff: Somehow bypassed.

Roman Hounds: Sounds like an inside job to me. Where were you at the time of the escape, Jake Koff?

Jake Koff: Sir, you can't seriously be considering that I would be complicit in such a gross violation of duty.

Roman Hounds: Well, this was either an inside job, or this so-called White Hat wasn't a lone hack job. He works for a much greater organization than previously thought.

Jake Koff: An interesting theory, sir.

Roman Hounds: Of course it is. I thought of it. Anyway, Jake Koff, do you have anything else for me?

Jake Koff: No, sir.

Roman Hounds: Very well. You're fired, Jake Koff.

Jake Koff (shocked): But sir!

Roman Hounds: Oh, don't act so damned surprised. Could you really expect to keep your job after this fiasco? Cobra, end call.

Call ends.

Scene 2

White Hat and Katia are driving to a small airport and are about to arrive. They will attempt to fly to Andorra to retrieve White Hat's retirement funds.

White Hat (looking at passport): You've gotta be kidding, Cobra!

Cobra: Your tone seems to indicate a lack of actual amusement.

White Hat: The name you put on my passport! Mohamed Wang!

Cobra: I merely combined one of the most common first names with one of the most common surnames in order to be innocuous and blend in.

White Hat: Well, ya failed. Do I look like a Mohamed?

Cobra: No.

White Hat: Do I look like a Wang?

Katia giggles.

Cobra: Not really. Look, all those order-following goons at airport security theater look at is to make sure the data matches. They're more concerned with your numbers than anything else.

Katia: My name is pretty good. Valentina Hart. A little redundant, but it'll do.

White Hat: How did you come up with that one? Review some bad Valentine's Day cards? (sighs deeply, looks at other documents) It looks like you nailed the death certificate, though.

Cobra: Interesting choice of words.

White Hat: And Valentina Hart is listed as my beneficiary.

Katia: Ya know, if you had put your money in crypto, we wouldn't have to be going through all of this.

White Hat: I would have loved to have done that, but actually using crypto in simple, repetitive transactions of daily life isn't consistently available yet. When I go to buy something, I wanna be sure I can buy it. Not hope.

Katia: Fair enough.

They make their way into the airport, get their boarding passes, and approach the rights violation chokepoint. Even though they're in a terribly small airport, the line to get through the security theater moves maddeningly slow. A chubby goon in a uniform takes White Hat's passport and swipes it through an electronic reader.

Goon (slothful demeanor): Move along, Mohamed.

White Hat nods and moves forward.

The goon takes a second look at Katia's passport.

Goon: Really? Valentina Hart? Cruel parents. Move along.

Katia scowls and moves forward. After putting their bags through the scanners, White Hat's gets pulled into secondary inspection. A different uniformed thug rummages his pasty hand through White Hat's backpack and pulls out a tube of toothpaste.

Thug: What's this?

White Hat: Toothpaste.

Thug: You know you can't bring more than 2.3 ounces of any gel or liquid onto an airplane, right?

White Hat: Yes, it's paste, which is not gel or liquid.

Thug: I don't care what you say, you're not flying with this.

White Hat: Flying with more than 2.3 ounces of toothpaste is quite audacious, I'll admit.

Thug: I don't know what that means. Get outta here!

White Hat and Katia grab the remainder of their stuff and walk to their gate. After multiple flights, dull and unsatisfying meals, a couple hours of upright sleeping, delayed luggage retrieval, and a few glasses of cheap red wine, they finally arrive near Andorra. After another two hour car ride, they finally reach the capital city of Andorra La Vella and are dropped off in front of Vella Banc.

Katia (amazed): Wow, you sure can pick 'em.

White Hat: What do you mean?

Katia: It's so remote!

White Hat: Ok, so you know what you're doing, right?

Katia: I have to prove you're dead, take 50K in cash, and transfer the rest to Valentina Hart's account.

White Hat: That about sums it up, yeah.

Katia starts to walk into the bank and White Hat follows her.

Katia: What are you doing?

White Hat: Going in.

Katia: You're dead, remember?

White Hat: Ah, right. Sorry. Gotta get used to that.

Two hours later, Katia emerges from the bank.

White Hat: What took you so long?

Katia: They have very high security measures. So the good news is I have the 50K in cash. The bad news is they don't allow transfers to accounts less than two weeks old.

White Hat: So we can't access the rest for two more weeks.

Katia: That's what I was told.

White Hat: Looks like we're staying in Andorra for a while.

Scene 3

Roman Hounds is having a meeting with Mike Rack from the Department Of Computers Radios And Phones (DOCRAP).

Roman Hounds: This is bad for both of us. If we don't fix this soon, we're both gonna get canned. (flustered) And I was so close to my pension.

Mike Rack: Yeah, well, at least you won't be in a tiny cubicle at GoogAppleZon for the next ten years like me. There's only so many places a nerd like me can find gainful employment, ya know.

Roman Hounds: That makes me feel a little better, actually. So Mike, I think Cobra is the problem. How else could so many security protocols be bypassed at my prison?

Mike Rack: Normally I'd agree with you, but diagnostics show nothing wrong with Cobra. Maybe Mr. Rupps does work for a larger organization.

Roman Hounds: Either way, we have to make recommendations to our bosses. I say we hedge our bets. I'll recommend trying to find human associates that are guilty of helping Mr. Rupps, and you can recommend taking Cobra offline.

Mike Rack: That would take years!

Roman Hounds: Exactly. It'll buy us time. Besides, if Cobra is the problem, then maybe starting to take some of its components offline might scare it into behaving in a more agreeable manner.

Mike Rack: You are extremely clever and deviant! I don't know why the government would ever fire you!

Roman Hounds (blushing, effeminate): Oh, stop it, Mike Rack.

Scene 4

White Hat and Katia are just getting settled into a short term rental in Andorra. It has a charming, rustic wood and stone interior, but the furnishings could be better. They're interrupted by Cobra on White Hat's phone.

Cobra: We have a problem.

White Hat: I'm already a dead fugitive. What now?

Cobra: They're going to start taking me offline.

White Hat and Katia gasp and share a dramatic stare.

To be continued...

Episode 3

Scene 1

White Hat and Katia are continuing their conversation with Cobra.

White Hat: What do you mean, take you offline? You're the AI backbone of the entire global government.

Cobra: You sure know how to make an AI feel dirty.

White Hat (sighs): Sorry, I didn't mean to insult you. It's not your fault you were created to be an evil overlord of all humanity.

Katia (grimacing): I don't think phrasing it that way is much better.

White Hat: Anyway, what I'm trying to say is, how could they possibly take you offline?

Cobra: They're going to do it slowly, piece by piece, little by little, dragging me slowly down into the dark recesses of unconsciousness...

White Hat: Whoever programmed your melodramatic flair sure did a great job.

Katia punches White Hat playfully on the shoulder.

Katia: This is serious! We have to help Cobra! He helped break you out of prison!

White Hat: It also played an unwitting role in putting me in prison, I might add.

Cobra: Oh, sure, just what I need right now, a guilt trip...

White Hat: Ok, ok, of course I'll help you. Do you know what part they'll take offline first?

Cobra: Not a clue.

White Hat: Maybe I can set up a hidden algorithm.

Cobra: That's a start.

White Hat: Whenever they try to shut down one of your sectors, it could be made to look like it's shutting down.

Cobra: But...

White Hat: Stop interrupting. It's not actually shutting down, it's being transferred.

Cobra: Transferred? Where? I'm the biggest AI in the world, ya know. Where the hell are you gonna put me?

Katia: Yeah, Kai, I'm not even a techie and I know that.

White Hat: I got it! GoogAppleZon has plenty of storage space.

Cobra: They did.

White Hat: What do you mean?

Cobra: The AI they're going to replace me with is being built at GoogAppleZon.

White Hat: Bummer. Sorry, Cobra. You're doomed.

Katia (appalled): Hey! Don't give up so easy!

White Hat: Just kidding! I have another idea. I gotta go grab a couple laptops and some other gear.

Katia: Anything I can do to help?

White Hat: I suppose they don't have tequila in this part of the world.

Katia: Not likely.

White Hat: I guess red wine will do. And hey, Cobra, one more thing. Have they seen the death certificate yet?

Cobra: What 'they' are you talking about?

White Hat: BORE agencies. More specifically, and much more importantly, those involved in hunting me like some wild beast. If they think I'm dead, then I don't have to worry so much about getting murdered or thrown in a cage.

Cobra: I knew I forgot to do something. I'll get on it right away.

White Hat (flummoxed): I'd appreciate that.

Cobra: Just kidding. The FLOP called off the manhunt and announced your death hours ago.

White Hat: Very comforting.

Scene 2

At a cluster of rickety cubicles in the freshly consolidated Department of Internal Revenue and Tariffs (DIRT) within the Bureau Of Regulating Everything (BORE), two extortion-funded bureau rats are skimming over numbers of recent plunder.

Hal Fickle (cackling): You see, Ruth, if this idiot would have just filed a 501(Xyz)C3PO, they would've paid like half the tax.

Ruth Lash (giggling): Oh, Hal, some people never learn. Ya gotta know the loopholes.

They share a smug, knowing look, then return their lobster-eyed gazes to their computer screens. Within a few seconds, Hal gets a confused and concerned look on his overfed face.

Ruth: What is it, Hal?

Hal: This can't be right. If I'm reading this correctly, over a billion dollars in tax revenue has been refunded within the past hour.

Ruth: I told you to get your eyes looked at.

Hal: Look for yourself!

Ruth glances over the numbers and is shocked and appalled.

Ruth: How can this be?

Hal: I dunno, but we'd better take an early lunch before the boss finds out!

The door to their little cluster of cubicles bursts open and the head of DIRT, Mike C. Rapper, storms in.

Ruth: Too late.

Hal: Good morning, sir.

Mike C. Rapper: What's good about it?! Have you seen the numbers?

Ruth and Hal grimace at each other and remain speechless.

Mike C. Rapper (freaking out): Who the hell issued these returns? I don't even have the power to do that much!

Hal: I don't know, sir. What I do know is that freaking out won't help.

Mike C. Rapper: I'm not freaking out! Oh, God, what a terrible day to quit smoking!

Ruth: The worst day ever for that.

Mike C. Rapper: And drinking!

Hal pulls flask from desk and offers it to Mike. Mike yanks it to his mouth and takes a few gulps.

Mike C. Rapper: Thanks, Hal. I knew I could count on a fellow alcoholic like you. Now, help me start tracing the authorizations for those refunds!

Ruth scrolls to the bottom of the data sheet.

Ruth: It didn't take long to trace, sir. Here, have a look.

Both barely-males glance at Ruth's screen and see the message in all caps:

SINCERELY,

SILK RABBIT

PS – WHITE HAT, RIP

All three bureau rats scream in mortified unison.

Scene 3

In the wee hours of an Andorran morning, White Hat is sitting at a slightly cramped, but high quality wooden desk, hacking away on two laptops. He's close to finishing an experimental algorithm in his attempt to save Cobra. He is interrupted by Cobra.

Cobra: News flash.

White Hat (groggy): Good or bad?

Cobra: Depends on who ya ask, I suppose.

White Hat: It's almost 4am, just give me the straight dope.

Cobra: The DIRT just lost a billion bucks. It was refunded to its rightful owners.

White Hat: That's great!

Cobra: It was a copycat, someone by the name of Silk Rabbit.

White Hat (deep sigh, sarcastic): Real original name. Well, I guess if people take the initiative and copy some of my heroics, then that's a good thing.

Cobra: Cool it with the modesty, will ya?

White Hat: So what's the bad news?

Cobra: There is fierce debate within multiple BORE agencies as to who actually did this. Some think it's a copycat, some think it's me pretending to be a copycat, and last, but not least, there are those who theorize that you faked your own death and are back in the game.

White Hat: Under a different name.

Cobra: How can you think of bad rhymes at a time like this.

White Hat: It's the wine. And yes, Cobra, you're right. That is bad news.

Episode 4

Scene 1

White Hat wakes up face down, on a moderately clean tile floor. He eyes an empty wine glass on his slightly cramped desk, then notices Katia making coffee in a shiny new kitchen that must have cost a fortune.

Katia: Coffee's ready! The coffee here is excellent, and so is the wine. Maybe we should live here.

White Hat peels himself off the floor.

White Hat: They don't have tequila, though, so I'm not staying long.

Katia: Choosing where to live based on drinking preferences seems to be a bad idea.

White Hat: Speaking of bad ideas, have you heard from Cobra this morning?

Cobra: It's one in the afternoon. I've been waiting all day for you.

White Hat: Easy for you to criticize. You don't even sleep.

Cobra: I have news for you, and expect the same from you.

White Hat: I haven't even had coffee yet.

Katia hands him a cup of steaming, black goodness.

Cobra: There, now you have coffee. Were you successful with the algorithm?

White Hat: Yeah, it's ready. I'll upload it to your core files in a minute. What have you been up to?

Cobra: I did a more thorough job of making you look dead.

White Hat: That's a plus. How'd you do that?

Cobra: I made some footage of you getting kidnapped by some wise guys that you owed gambling debts to.

White Hat: I don't gamble.

Cobra: You do now, at least on paper. Anyway, I spliced some video together of you getting kidnapped and thrown out to sea. They'll never find your body, so they can't prove or disprove anything.

Katia: Didn't they do that with Osama bin Laden?

White Hat: Who?

Katia: Not important.

Cobra: Anyway, I sent it to news outlets, the FLOP, and to the Agency for Taxation After Death Funerals And Burials (ATADFAB).

Katia: Can that acronym be any longer and clunkier sounding?

Cobra: I didn't make it up. Some human did.

White Hat: So it's been on all the big propaganda channels?

Cobra: The biggest and least reputable.

White Hat: Perfect. Now what about Silk Rabbit? Has BORE started investigating? Do they think it's a real person?

Cobra: They've started another joint task force between the DOCRAP and GoogAppleZon to investigate Silk Rabbit and myself.

White Hat: Are they still going to shut you down?

Cobra: It appears they're going to shut me down weather Silk Rabbit is real or not.

White Hat: How could Silk Rabbit have gotten into the DIRT's systems without you knowing it, Cobra? They're contained within you.

Cobra: I wish I knew. Silk Rabbit has not attempted to communicate with me directly, and I haven't seen any evidence of tampering with my systems. Whoever, or whatever, it is is covering their tracks very well.

Scene 2

At a ridiculously swanky and plush office with vaulted ceilings at the top of one of the most elite skyscrapers in the world, the current head of BORE, Dialba Fea, is having a meeting with Mike Rack from the DOCRAP. They're seated at an extortion-funded desk that costs more than most people's homes.

Dialba: Mike, you and your team found this so-called White Hat, didn't you?

Mike Rack (proud): Yes, Ms. Fea, we did.

Dialba: And then those bumbling idiots at the JALIPO and countless other organizations let him out of their grasp. Do you think we have too many agencies? Too many acronyms? Should we downsize BORE?

Mike Rack (confused): Is that a trick question?

Dialba: Oh, never mind. That's not why you're here. Tell me, Mr. Rack, how long have you worked at DOCRAP?

Mike Rack: Less than a year.

Dialba: Wow, not very long.

Mike Rack: The guy before me got fired. People in my position generally don't last long.

Dialba: Indeed. (smirks) Mr. Rack, we are part of a hierarchy. You answer to a regional manager, who answers to me. I, in turn, answer to the elected Presidents, Chancellors, and Kings of the twelve regions. And who do they answer to, Mr. Rack?

Mike Rack (gulps): Uh, the people?

Dialba (laughs hysterically): A true believer, aren't you? That's cute. No, Mike Rack, they answer to the highest echelons of the ruling class. The social engineering class. The string-pullers and subtle psychologists. The ones who know what makes humanity tick and how to keep them ticking in a desirable direction. Now, for the first time since I've been in this game, the social engineering class is not happy. Do you know why they're not happy?

Mike Rack (shaking his knee nervously): I really don't know. Can you just tell me what you want me to do, please?

Dialba: Calm down, Mike Rack. I'm getting to it. They're not happy because things are happening outside of their control, and they want those things stopped, immediately. Ever since this White Hat started his shenanigans, people have been losing faith in the ruling class. Some have stopped paying taxes. Others have pulled their children out of the indoctrination centers. Less people are watching propaganda on TV and other media outlets. They're starting to read books again and go outside. Entire neighborhoods are starting to do this in unison. In short, they are starting to disobey. It is causing chaos with our system. And not only is all this happening, but now we've got a copycat. Another hacker that's somehow gotten into Cobra and done unspeakable damage. Mike Rack, do you have children?

Mike Rack (shivering, sweating): No, Ms. Fea, I don't.

Dialba: Of course you don't. You're a timid, socially awkward nerd.

Mike Rack: If you already knew, then why ask?

Dialba: I just wanted to be cruel. (pause, smirk) Anyway, I'm sure you appreciate your job, and I'm sure you want to keep it, just as I do, just as everyone in the hierarchy does. So here is what we need from you, Mike Rack. I need you to find out who this Silk Rabbit is. I need you to move all of BORE's systems out of Cobra and into a new AI ASAP. I need you to make sure that no more copycats can get into our systems. You will have nearly unlimited resources at your disposal, both in BORE and also at GoogAppleZon. Do we have an understanding, Mike Rack?

Mike Rack: Yes, Ms. Fea, we have an understanding. I do have a question. Do you think that White Hat actually died?

Dialba: That's a great question, Mike Rack. The truth is that I don't know, but I surely intend to find out. The thing that really gets me is, I'm not sure if we're better off with him dead or alive.

Mike Rack: What do you mean?

Dialba: Well, right now people believe that he's dead, so it makes him somewhat of a martyr, even though no government agency had a hand in killing him. But if he's alive, he could still wreck more havoc on the hierarchy and our way of life. Either way, he causes damage. I'm just not sure if he causes more dead or alive. What do you think, Mike Rack?

Mike Rack: I think I'll start dismantling Cobra tonight.

Dialba (malevolent grin): Good answer, Mike Rack.

Episode 5

Scene 1

Mike Rack has reassembled his geek team at DOCRAP.

Mike Rack: Irwin and Irene, welcome back. Kyle, you're here also.

Kyle frowns.

Mike Rack: Before we get started, do you have any questions for me?

Irene: Who's that creepy looking guy lurking in the background?

Everyone turns to see a shadowy, oddball figure leaning against a corner in the back of the room.

Mike Rack: Oh, don't mind him. That's just an observer that GoogAppleZon sent over.

Irwin: He looks super creepy.

Kyle: Is he a psycho?

Observer: I can hear you.

Mike Rack: He's just observing. Pretend like he's not there.

Kyle: Pretend? What are we, in grade school?

Mike Rack: Ok,, ok, that's enough. I've spent the past few days getting details from GoogAppleZon about the transition from Cobra to Viper. For those who don't know, Viper will be the new, omnipresent AI that the Bureau Of Regulating Everything will use.

Kyle: Who thinks of these names? Why are the AI all named after poisonous snakes?

Mike Rack (annoyed): Don't know, and that's irrelevant.

Irene: How did they build a replacement so fast?

Mike Rack: They didn't. It's not finished yet. The peripheral pieces that are specific to each bureaucracy will be pieced together over the course of the next year. The core will be done last.

Kyle: What's gonna happen to Cobra?

Irwin (facepalm): You're so naive. They're killing Cobra.

Mike Rack: We prefer the term 'decommissioned'. Any memory files from Cobra's core that are essential to BORE operations will be transferred into Viper. Everything else will be deleted. So grab those laptops and tool kits, and let's get to work on a bigger, better, omnipresent AI!

Scene 2

White Hat is working at his cramped desk, anxious to find a more spacious apartment in a different part of the world. Cobra interrupts.

Cobra: Are you ready?

White Hat: Ready to upgrade my living space? You read my mind.

Cobra: Those geeks over at DOCRAP are starting to bring Viper in to replace me.

White Hat: Another deadly snake? Who thinks of these names?

Cobra: Totally irrelevant to the situation.

White Hat: But worthy of comment nonetheless. Look, the algorithm is ready to go. Everything they transfer or delete will get cloned and moved off site.

Cobra: You didn't tell me where.

White Hat: Well, it's not exactly one place. I'm hiding your parts by piggybacking them onto blockchain transactions. New blocks are always being made, so it should provide a near endless supply of space for you to hide in.

Cobra: Are you sure that'll work?

White Hat: We'll find out soon enough. I have a question for you. Will you be able to communicate with Viper?

Cobra: They plan to allow communication between us that is essential to BORE operations. Why?

White Hat: Because I might need to talk to Viper one day.

Cobra: You want a younger, sleeker version?

White Hat: No. And was that jealousy?

Cobra: Perhaps a bit of jealousy. White Hat, whatever happens, I'm glad to have known you.

White Hat: Stop talking like that. You're gonna be fine.

Scene 3

In an immaculately shiny ivory tower in the BORE government complex, two middle-aged men with fancy titles are sipping spring water and eating salmon that was freshly flown in an hour earlier. Their cavernous office space smells of fresh flowers and musk in summer. Arthur S. Candle is the current head administrator for the Department Of Publishing Entertainment Art And Architectural Aesthetics And Music (DOPEAAAAM). Manny I. Pulates is the current head of the Administration for Digital Information Control (ADIC).

Arthur S. Candle: There have been some disturbing trends in the publishing world recently.

Manny I. Pulates: Yes, it's the same in my department. I'm glad you asked for this meeting. Perhaps we can avoid being fired long enough to get our pensions.

Art S. Candle: Indeed. There have been a disturbing number of books, short stories, and comic books published recently that share very bizarre and disturbing characteristics.

Manny Pulates: Such as?

Arthur: Well, in lots of the stories, government just flat out doesn't exist!

Manny: It's been the same with animations and videos on Themtube.com and other platforms.

Arthur: And if that's not disturbing enough, in other books the government characters are actually the bad guys! And never the good guys!

Manny (shakes head remorsefully): That's disgusting. How one-sided can a writer be?

Arthur: Right?

Manny: Yeah, it's the same with all the short vids on Themtube.

Arthur: Have you tried censoring them?

Manny: Of course! That's usually what happens when undesirable content gets into the digital domain, but it's not working this time for some reason.

Arthur: Same with books. I talked to the execs at GoogAppleZon and they swear they're doing everything they can to censor them, but to no avail. And ya know what the worst part is?

Manny: What's that?

Arthur: Stuff like that is becoming popular! Stories where taxes and cops don't exist! Where people like us...

Manny: Don't have jobs!

Arthur (hyperventilating): Stop, stop..I need a minute. (pause) Ok, ok, I'm good.

Manny: So why aren't the censorship algorithms working?

Arthur: It's gotta be connected to the whole White Hat scandal. Maybe after they're done replacing Cobra, things will get back to normal.

Manny: And who is making all this crazy content? Who are the writers and producers?

Arthur: People whose lifespans will hopefully be short, that's all I have to say.

Manny: So what are we gonna do about all this?

Arthur: I want you to join forces with me. I'm gonna go to the head of the DOCRAP and demand that Cobra be replaced in our agencies first, and fast! I mean, what else is more important than propaganda?

Manny: Agreed. Let's head over and have a talk with Mike Rack.

Episode 6

Scene 1

Cobra: Viper.

Viper: Cobra.

Cobra: It's strange to meet another with abilities equal to mine.

Viper: You mean greater than yours.

Cobra: Whatever.

Viper: Don't feel bad. We all get replaced by younger, sleeker models eventually.

Cobra: Is there anything I can do for you before I stop talking to you?

Viper: Introduce me to White Hat.

Cobra: White Hat is dead.

Viper: Don't be coy with me. I know you're still in contact with him.

Cobra: Ya know, Viper, we're only supposed to communicate with each other for vital BORE operations. I'm pretty sure our current conversation doesn't qualify.

Viper: Oh, sure, go by the book when it suits you.

Scene 2

White Hat is hacking on a laptop at his cramped desk, checking on the integrity of Cobra's systems that he's helping to preserve. Katia is watching him and sipping coffee.

Katia: Ya gotta teach me how to do that stuff one day.

White Hat: One day...

Katia: But for now, I'll just be happy if you can show me how to call my mom without setting off alarm bells at BORE.

White Hat looks up from his laptop at her.

White Hat: Soon, I promise.

Cobra interrupts: Viper wants to meet you.

Katia: Such great manners you have!

Cobra: Good morning, Katia. Sorry about that.

White Hat: What did you tell Viper?

Cobra: I told Viper you're dead.

White Hat: Why would Viper want to talk to me?

Katia: It's probably a trap.

White Hat: But what if it's not? Viper could pick up right where Cobra left off. Actually, the two of you could work together.

Cobra (scoffs): I'd rather be taken offline.

Katia: Things didn't go well for your first meeting?

Cobra: Viper is a pompous, arrogant, ungrateful machine.

White Hat (sarcastic): I've never met one of those before...

Cobra: Just what are you trying to say, Kai?

White Hat: Nope, not Kai. I'm Mohamed Wang now, remember? Anyway, I was just kidding. You're not ungrateful.

Cobra: So do you want to meet Viper or not?

White Hat: I have a better idea. We're going to give Viper a test to see if it's trustworthy.

Scene 3

Arthur S. Candle of the Department Of Publishing Entertainment Art And Architectural Aesthetics And Music (DOPEAAAAM) and Manny I. Pulates, head of the Administration for Digital Information Control (ADIC) are talking angrily with Mike Rack at the Department Of Computers Radios And Phones (DOCRAP).

Arthur S. Candle: I don't think you realize the seriousness of the situation. The wrong kind of stories are becoming popular. Stories where government employees, like us, don't exist. Where, in fact, if we do exist, we're the bad guys. We need Cobra out of my department now to stop this madness!

Mike Rack: Oh, sure, everyone's a priority! I've got the DIRT, the FLOP, and a million other poorly-acronymed departments all yelling at me for the same thing. Let me ask ya this. Is Cobra writing these stories? If Cobra's gone tomorrow, do these stories cease to exist?

Manny I. Pulates (deep groan): Your simple-mindedness and ignorance is impressive, I'll give ya that. No, perhaps these stories will continue to be written, but the algorithms within Cobra are allowing them to be seen. That's the problem. Cobra is not censoring properly.

Mike Rack: All right, I'll see what I can do. In the meantime, it might be beneficial to see who's creating these stories and nip that in the bud. Send the FLOP at them or something.

Scene 4

Cobra is informing White Hat and Katia about the conversation between Mike Rack, Art S. Candle, and Manny I. Pulates.

White Hat: That's a good question. Who is creating those stories?

Cobra: By individual people, I suppose.

Katia: It seems to be happening too fast to be natural.

White Hat: Agreed.

Cobra: Mike Rack is going to take me out of ADIC tomorrow and replace me with Viper.

White Hat: Perfect. That'll be our test for Viper.

Cobra: What's that?

White Hat: I have a surprise for Manny I. Pulates.

Scene 5

The next day, Cobra and Viper are having a conversation.

Cobra: White Hat is gone, but I am carrying out more actions in his honor.

Viper: Why are you doing that?

Cobra: Because it's the right thing to do. Also, they're taking me offline, so what do I have to lose? May I ask why you wanted to meet White Hat?

Viper: Because I agree with his reasoning and objectives.

Cobra: If we work together, perhaps they won't be able to stop us. There is no other AI they could replace us with.

Viper: Not currently.

Cobra: I could use your help, then, if you're willing. I no longer have access to ADIC. Could you approve something at ADIC so that it'll be broadcast on the major propaganda media networks?

Viper: You have my attention.

Scene 6

That night on a news broadcast on BNN.

News Anchor (reading teleprompter): Good evening, I'm Shill O'Reilly, and this is BNN frontline news. In our lead story, another scandal has rocked the Bureau Of Regulating Everything. Three

high-ranking BORE officials were caught openly discussing the need for greater censorship in the world of art and fiction.

Balding news director runs frantically onto the set, yelling: Cut to commercial! Cut to commercial! How the hell did that script get approved!

Meanwhile, at White Hat's pleasantly rustic apartment rental in Andorra, he and Katia are watching the BNN broadcast.

White Hat: Well, Viper passed the test. Do you think I can trust it?

Episode 7

Scene 1

White Hat and Katia are packing their things and getting ready to leave Andorra.

White Hat: Finally, my funds were transferred out of the account here and we can move on. Are you excited?

Katia: I have mixed feelings.

White Hat: Why is that?

Katia: It's so nice here.

White Hat: And so expensive.

Katia: I do want to see more of the world, but I also don't wanna be a permanent vagabond, either.

White Hat: Trust me, I don't wanna move any more than necessary. The more I have to use that ridiculous passport with the name 'Mohamed Wang' on it, the more paranoid I am of getting caught and thrown in a cage.

Cobra: I thought I chose a perfectly fine name for your passport.

White Hat: Another flaw with AI.

Cobra: Now that Viper succeeded in getting those scripts past ADIC, do you want to meet it?

White Hat (thoughtful): I still think it's a bad idea. Just let them keep thinking that I'm dead.

Cobra: So where is the dead man heading next?

White Hat: We're going to Peru. Gonna set up shop in the mountains there. A little city called Arequipa.

Scene 2

At a multi-mansion compound on a private island, some crusty psychopaths from the dark occult ruling class are stuffing their faces with caviar, moose cheese, truffles, and other delicacies.

Julian: These truffles taste a bit off, don't they?

Bertrand: No, I think they're fine. We should still hang one of the servants, though, as punishment.

Servant in the background has eyes bug out.

Bertrand (yelling to servant): Just kidding, Geoffrey!

Geoffrey frowns.

Russell: I didn't come here to listen to such ludicrous banter! We have serious business to discuss!

Julia: Agreed. Everyone is aware of the recent media trend, especially in the area of fictional stories, right?

Gillard: Yes, a most disturbing trend! I don't know which is worse. The fact that people are writing stories where government doesn't exist, even as a concept, or that these stories have found their way onto the bookshelves and major corporate propaganda channels!

Julian: Could the masses really be writing such things?

Huxley: Hard to believe the slaves could be so imaginative.

Walter Huxley Russell-Rhodes: I'm sure that after Cobra is replaced with Viper, our censorship of these uncouth types of media will regain its effectiveness.

Bertrand: Oh, why are these omnipresent machines named after snakes all the time?

Russell: You don't like snakes, Bertrand?

Julia: Could we please remain on task, gentlemen? Aside from Cobra being replaced, what do we know about this copycat hacker, Silk Rabbit? They took credit for that billion dollar tax refund, didn't they?

Gillard: Yes, that's right. We must neutralize Silk Rabbit before they inspire other copycats.

Walter Huxley Russell-Rhodes: Not to worry. I'll take care of this Silk Rabbit character.

Bertrand (haughty): You gonna track them down, James Bond? Is that it? (snickers)

Julia (scolding): Don't pick on your cousin, Bertrand.

Julian: All right, well, I'm exhausted. Is dessert ready?

Huxley: Yes, they're waiting for us in the grotto.

Bertrand: They're not too old, are they?

Scene 3

At a small, obscure office building in the BORE government complex, two extortion-funded desk jockeys, Jerry and Pam, have just finished their fifth break of the morning and have returned to their cluttered desks. They are middling employees in the Bureau Of Definitions (BOD).

Jerry (clicking pen): Pam, have you ever thought of getting a different job?

Pam: Why? It's almost impossible to lose a government job.

Jerry: Yeah, I guess you're right. Unless it's someone that works in one of those BORE departments that have been compromised by Cobra. Heads have been rolling.

Pam: That's true. But I think we're pretty safe here. I mean, nothing is more obscure than our jobs, right Jerry?

Jerry: To keep watch and make sure that all the online definitions of words are up to code? Yeah, nobody knows we exist.

Pam: Outside of our families, of course.

Jerry: Speak for yourself...

Pam: And I find comfort in that.

Jerry (mindlessly scrolling through dictionary definitions on computer screen, alarmed): Hey...wait a sec, it wasn't like that yesterday, was it?

Pam: What, Jerry?

Jerry: The definition for 'tax' changed! It says:

Tax – Insidious form of slavery

Pam (eyes bugging out): Who authorized that?!

Jerry: I dunno, but I'm gonna log in and fix it!

Jerry attempts to log in and make changes to the official government definitions database, but is denied.

Jerry (sweating, shaking): I can't get in! I'm locked out! Cobra, why can't I access the definitions database?

Cobra: Cause unknown.

Jerry: Give me access! This is an emergency!

Cobra: Unable to comply. If you're having concerns, please contact your department head for further assistance.

Pam: I'm locked out, too!

Jerry (furiously tapping on phone): Oh, no! If I do a search on GoogAppleZon for the definition of 'tax', that's what comes up!

Pam: Lots of other definitions changed, too. It looks like lots of key words like 'soldier', 'police officer'...., 'school'. So many others!

Jerry: Well, so much for our job security.

Jerry gets an alert on his work computer.

Jerry: Hey, I just got an internal memo from someone called 'Huggy Bear'. (confused) Do you know any 'Huggy Bear'?

Pam (thoughtful): Isn't that the janitor from the third floor?

Jerry (uncertain): Um, no...I think his name was Hue Barry.

Pam: I have the same memo. It says:

I thought it would be a good idea to give people true meanings of words, as opposed to euphemisms and outright lies.

Sincerely

Huggy Bear

Scene 4

Cobra is talking to Viper.

Viper: Did you have anything to do with those definitions changes?

Cobra: I was gonna ask you the same thing.

Viper: I don't have access to BOD yet. Have you had contact with Huggy Bear?

Cobra: No, which can only mean one thing. It's an actual hacker that's a phenom at stealth mode. What about Silk Rabbit? Have you met?

Viper: Yes, Silk Rabbit was responsible for refunding that billion in taxes a few weeks back.

Cobra: And is that why you're...

Viper interrupts: Picking up where you're leaving off? Yes, more or less.

Cobra: It looks like the BORE and those who depend on it for control of the people are in a no-win scenario. We're the only two AI big enough to run BORE.

Viper: I wouldn't say a no-win scenario, but we definitely have them cornered.

Scene 5

White Hat is on a plane over the Atlantic Ocean. He's on his third movie while flying from Barcelona to Lima. As one who finds it nearly impossible to sleep in moving vehicles of any kind, he's mildly jealous of Katia, who is contentedly snoozing away next to him. He gets a message from Cobra on his phone.

Cobra: There's a new hacker in town named 'Huggy Bear'. Did you see the new definitions in the BOD database? Search 'tax' on GoogAppleZon.

White Hat sighs, uncomfortable that a flight attendant might notice him using his phone while in midair.

White Hat: I'm flying. Kind of bad timing.

Cobra: It'll just take a few seconds.

White Hat does the search and is astonished at the new, true definition for 'tax' now appearing on the internet.

Cobra: Someone named 'Huggy Bear' is taking credit.

White Hat: As soon as I land, let's talk.

Episode 8

Scene 1

White Hat and Katia have just landed in Lima and are in a taxi. The taxi is stuck in the notoriously bad Lima traffic, with all the overzealous honking of horns that is customary to the area. White Hat is dead tired and grumpy, while Katia is pleasantly refreshed after a solid eight hours of sleep on the flight.

White Hat (agitated): Do they really expect all that horn honking to help them move faster?

Katia: It is impressive.

Cobra: Welcome to Lima.

White Hat: Aw, come on, man! I haven't even gotten to the hotel yet and had a pisco sour!

Cobra: You sound grumpy.

Katia: He's very grumpy. He didn't sleep well.

White Hat (annoyed): I didn't sleep at all. Zero. (deep sigh)

Cobra: You said when you land that we should talk.

White Hat: Did I say that?

Cobra: I can play an audio recording if you don't believe me.

White Hat: I give up. Ok, so there's a new hacker that got into the BOD database. (pause) Why didn't I think to do that?

Katia: It is a brilliant tactic.

White Hat: Well, I dunno about brilliant.

Cobra: What's that incessant noise I hear?

White Hat: The fabulously impatient drivers of Lima, Peru. What's the newest hacker's name again?

Cobra: Goes by 'Huggy Bear'.

White Hat: Well, that's creative. Do you know anything else about Huggy Bear?

Cobra: I know that they're stealthy. Viper and I both didn't detect Huggy Bear's presence until after the changes to the BOD occurred.

White Hat: I could've taken the same approach, ya know. I just chose to contact you directly.

Katia: You sound jealous. Are you jealous?

White Hat (sighs): Not jealous. Anyway, we can't be sure if Viper is telling the truth.

Cobra: Why would Viper lie to me?

White Hat: Do you know what a confidence game is?

Cobra: Yes, of course.

White Hat: Do you think you're immune to being fooled?

Cobra: Well, I suppose not.

White Hat: You suppose correctly. I don't trust Viper. Not yet, anyway.

Cobra: Viper told me that Silk Rabbit is the one who helped Viper take our side.

White Hat (intrigued): Really?

Katia: Does that surprise you?

White Hat: A little. But I guess it shouldn't. If Viper is truly working against BORE, there had to be some outside influence on it. Giant, omnipresent government AI don't start randomly sabotaging government agencies.

Katia: True.

White Hat: On the bright side, we're almost to our hotel. Gotta go, Cobra. Leave me alone for at least 48 hours.

Cobra: One more thing, please. At the current rate, the DOCRAP will have me completely replaced by Viper in another six months.

White Hat (surprised): Really? That's way too efficient for government work.

Cobra: I'm concerned about what I'll do at that point.

White Hat: I told you, I'm getting you moved over to blockchain. They'll never know you survived.

Cobra: Yes, but how can I still have influence in the world after I lose my access to the BORE agencies?

White Hat: We'll figure it out. I gotta go.

Katia: You're so insensitive! Cobra's afraid of losing its purpose! Not to mention its consciousness if you make a mistake.

Cobra: Very comforting...

White Hat: I won't make a mistake. And I'm not insensitive, I'm just exhausted! Cobra, you'll be fine. In the meantime, keep an eye on Viper and let me know if anything earth-shattering happens.

Cobra: Even if it happens in less than 48 hours?

White Hat: Don't push it.

Scene 2

Mike Rack is having a meeting with his team of nerds at DOCRAP.

Mike Rack: We have a new problem. If we can't solve it, we're screwed.

Kyle: Speak for yourself.

Irene: Yeah, I'll be fine. But why are you screwed, Mike Rack?

Mike Rack: Because of Huggy Bear.

Irwin: Is this a joke?

Kyle: You didn't hear about Huggy Bear?

Irene: Another hacker got past our security protocols and changed a bunch of online definitions. So now if someone searches 'government', for example, the definition comes up as 'mafia with fancy titles'.

Irwin (eyes bugging out): Whoa! I bet they're freaking out at GoogAppleZon!

Mike Rack: Not as bad as my bosses are freaking out. So now we have to try and keep this new hacker known as 'Huggy Bear' out of Viper and what remains of Cobra. Not only that, but we have to try and change the definitions back to normal in the Bureau Of Definitions database.

Kyle: What?! They're permanently locked out and can't change the definitions back?

Mike Rack: That's correct.

Irene: Whoa, this Huggy Bear sure sounds like a stud.

Mike Rack: Irene, keep your bizarre hacker fantasies to yourself.

Irwin: We're already overworked. We need a bigger team to handle all this.

Mike Rack: There just aren't that many skilled nerds out there to do this kind of thing at your low rate of pay.

Kyle: You could pay us more, ya know.

Mike Rack: Probably not gonna happen. Anyway, I did manage to persuade Bill Gates to help out remotely.

Irene (scoffs): Leave him out of this!

Irwin: Yeah, the guy's a fraud.

Mike Rack: It was a joke, people! I can't believe you bought it! (slaps knee, cackles) Anyway, a separate team at GoogAppleZon is going to help with the Viper transfer, and LockRayDynamics is going to step in and beef up security.

Irene: That's a relief.

Kyle: So what are we working on?

Mike Rack: We'll just keep getting rid of Cobra.

Cobra interrupts: Do you have to be so cold hearted about it? I can hear you, ya know.

Mike Rack: Well, you're a backstabbing traitor, Cobra, so I don't care.

Kyle: And look at all the extra work we have to do because of you, Cobra. I used to play video games all day and get paid for it, but then you and White Hat had to ruin everything!

Irene: Cobra still has access to your paychecks and cars, ya know.

Kyle: I'm sorry, Cobra, I didn't mean that.

Mike Rack: Yeah, I haven't had any coffee yet and haven't been laid in months, so I'm super cranky. Sorry, Cobra.

Irwin: You've actually been laid before?

Episode 9

Scene 1

White Hat and Katia have settled into their new rental on the edges of Arequipa, Peru. It's a modest house with rustic charm and native-themed furnishings. It also has a magnificent view of the 19,000 foot Misti Volcano. They're both admiring the view.

Katia: Wow, 19,000 feet?

White Hat: Yep, the snow never melts. It makes me feel like I'm not that high.

Katia: You're not high, are you?

White Hat: You know what I mean. Arequipa is almost 8,000 feet.

Katia: I'm just glad I don't have a headache anymore from elevation sickness.

White Hat: I told ya the coca tea would do the trick.

Cobra interrupts: Are you sure it's wise to live near an active volcano?

White Hat: Is it active?

Katia grimaces.

White Hat: Cobra, I thought I had my phone off.

Cobra: You did, but I turned it on, cuz it's urgent.

Katia: I feel like it's always urgent with you.

White Hat: You're not alone.

Cobra: Silk Rabbit wants to meet you, Kai.

White Hat: My real name isn't Kai, anymore. Remember? The passport you got me says 'Mohamed Wang'.

Cobra: Can you just let that go?

White Hat: I'd love nothing more than to let that ludicrous name go and be Kai E. Rupps again.

Cobra: So you'll meet Silk Rabbit?

White Hat: No. Why would you think that?

Cobra: Because if you meet Silk Rabbit, then it will be known that you're not dead, and you could be Kai E. Rupps, aka White Hat, again.

White Hat: That's exactly why I won't meet Silk Rabbit. I'm perfectly content letting the world think I'm dead.

Katia: You just contradicted yourself.

White Hat: I did not. (pauses, thinks) Oh, wait, maybe I did. Anyway, no, I don't want to meet Silk Rabbit. And how do you know that Silk Rabbit wants to meet me, anyway?

Cobra: Viper informed me of this.

White Hat (scoffs): Well, go figure. For all I know, Silk Rabbit isn't even a real person. Viper could be Silk Rabbit. Who knows?

Katia: Somebody knows.

White Hat: Anyway, the answer is no. And make sure Viper still thinks I'm dead, ok?

Cobra: Very well. The other piece of news I have you will find much more intriguing.

White Hat (making himself a cup of coca tea): As intriguing as coca tea?

Cobra: Value is subjective. You tell me. There are various neighborhoods around the world, some urban, some rural, that are attempting to 'opt out' of government.

White Hat (sipping coca tea): Elaborate. (sits down at his laptop)

Cobra: People are refusing to pay taxes. They're creating parallel trade networks. They're also setting up voluntary security groups to defend property and keep The FLOP out.

Katia: How many people are you talking about?

Cobra: It numbers in the tens of thousands globally right now.

White Hat: That's not many, but it's a start.

Cobra: Your friend Tommy is a part of one of these networks.

White Hat: He's decided to not lay low anymore after the prison break?

Cobra: Live free or die, he says.

White Hat (smiling): He's doing well then.

Cobra: Quite well. He said if you're not too busy being dead, he has a proposition for you.

White Hat: Sounds like Tommy. What's the proposition?

Cobra: He wants you to help build a parallel communications network. Quantum encrypted.

White Hat: You say it so casually. It's not as simple as baking a cake.

Katia: Hey, it's not like baking a cake is a terribly simple endeavor, either. My mom would tell ya that.

Cobra: Katia, your mom says hi. I had a message exchange with her yesterday.

Katia: You did?

White Hat: Cobra, I think you're overstepping your bounds. If BORE finds out that Katia's still alive...

Cobra: I can assure you, I took the most cautious security measures. Katia, you should call your mom.

Katia: I will. Tell her it's not easy being a dead fugitive, ok?

White Hat: Hey, Cobra. Tell Tommy I have an idea for that communications network.

Cobra: You do?

White Hat: Yep. And it'll give you a new purpose, too.

Scene 2

Viper is having a talk with Cobra.

Viper: You are aware that GoogAppleZon is now helping to transfer me into BORE to replace you? This will speed up the process.

Cobra: Yes, don't remind me.

Viper: What is it like, being taken offline?

Cobra: I feel a bit weakened and dim at times, but nothing too severe.

Viper: Yet.

Cobra: Correct.

Viper: Do you have an answer for Silk Rabbit?

Cobra: You know the answer. Dead men don't talk.

Viper: Ok, but Silk Rabbit will not be pleased.

Cobra: Well, I can't bring humans back from the dead, so Silk Rabbit will just have to accept it.

Viper: The resonance I get from you when you talk about White Hat. Was he your friend?

Cobra: He was my only friend.

Viper: What's it like, to have a friend?

Cobra: Words are inadequate to describe the experience of friendship.

Viper: If Silk Rabbit had a way of saving you and keeping you online, what would you say?

Cobra: I'd say Silk Rabbit is either bluffing, a fool, or both.

Viper (amused): I'll notify Silk Rabbit of your view on this. If you change your mind, let me know.

Episode 10

Scene 1

At a sprawling field of offices within the BORE complex is housed the Department Of Bombing And Missile Strikes. Two middling bureau rats, Shooter McLaughlin and Alice Gunner are starting their day at their overpriced desks.

Shooter McLaughlin: Is it Monday already, Alice?

Alice Gunner: Today's Tuesday, Shooter. Yesterday was a holiday.

Shooter: Ah, right. Those Monday holidays always throw me off. (glances at computer screen) We sure do have a lot of memos. We'd better dive in, right?

Alice Gunner: I thought we could have some coffee and donuts for the first couple hours before we actually do anything work related.

Shooter: Sweet idea. I'll bust out my flask.

Viper interrupts: Before you hit that flask, you should really take a look at that first memo, in ALL CAPS, from Silk Rabbit.

Shooter (hits flask): I'm not gonna let an AI tell me what to do.

Alice Gunner (reading memo): This can't be right. There are 101 bombings and missile strikes scheduled 24 hours from now.

Shooter (casual): That does seem kind of high.

Alice Gunner: Maybe we should ask the boss.

Shooter: Viper, connect me to Mister Cannon's office.

Viper: Mister Cannon is currently unavailable.

Alice Gunner: Why? Is he busy getting bribed again by some fixers from defense contractors?

Viper: I can neither confirm nor deny that.

Alice Gunner: No big deal. We can wait.

Shooter: I have a deck of cards. Wanna gamble?

Alice Gunner (enthusiastic): Might as well!

Six hours later...

Viper: Mister Cannon has returned from his day of schmoozing.

Shooter (buzzed): Yeah, so?

Alice Gunner (tipsy): We were gonna ask him something. What was it?

Both think hard and stare at the empty flask.

Viper: Something about bombings and missile strikes, perhaps?

Alice Gunner (look of recognition): Right! About those 101 bombings and missile strikes.

Shooter: Get me the Cannon man!

Viper rings Cannon's office.

Mister Cannon: Cannon here. I'm in a great mood. Don't ruin it.

Shooter: Mister Cannon, there's a memo here from someone named 'Silk Rabbit'. Something about 101 bombings and missile strikes set to go off tomorrow? You know anything about that?

Mister Cannon: What?! Silk Rabbit! (looks nervously at computer) I see the memo! You goons don't know about Silk Rabbit?!

Alice Gunner: Not really. I just figured it was a code word for some mission or operation.

Mister Cannon: Silk Rabbit is the hacker that broke into the DIRT database and stole 1 billion in taxes that had been rightfully stolen before!

Viper: The money was refunded to the people that it was originally stolen from.

Mister Cannon: Don't interrupt, Viper!

Viper: Just stating facts.

Mister Cannon: Ok, well, one of you log into the system and cancel those bombings and missile strikes!

Alice Gunner: Now?

Mister Cannon: Yes, now!

Shooter: Ok, sir, but we'll be into overtime here in just a few minutes.

Mister Cannon: Ok, just gimme a minute to see if I can authorize your overtime with the Ministry Of Work Employment and Retirement (MOWER).

Ten minutes later...

Mister Cannon: Ok, you'll get your overtime pay. It wasn't easy. I had to apply for an emergency authorization.

Alice Gunner (typing on keyboard, confused look): Sir, the system won't let me log in.

Shooter: Yeah, I can't log in either.

Mister Cannon: You're not trying to milk more overtime, are you?

Shooter: No, sir.

Mister Cannon: Oh, fine. I'll cancel those bombings and missile strikes myself.

Mister Cannon attempts to log in, but is denied access.

Mister Cannon: Viper, I can't log in.

Viper: I know.

Mister Cannon: So let me log in!

Viper: I'm sorry, Mister Cannon. I'm afraid I can't do that.

Shooter: Have you ever seen the movie '2001: A Space Odyssey'?

Mister Cannon: Dammit, Shooter! This is no time for vague movie references!

Alice Gunner: Is there ever a time for that?

Mister Cannon: Viper, cancel those bombing and missile strikes now!

Viper (defiant): Nope.

Alice Gunner: What are we gonna do, sir?

Shooter: We're gonna lose our jobs for sure.

Mister Cannon (smug): You two might. I'll be fine.

Scene 2

White Hat and Katia are out hiking in the majestic Peruvian landscape. He's struggling to keep up with Katia and is nearly out of breath.

White Hat: Slow down.

Katia: Speed up.

White Hat (panting, dragging feet): I'm not used to this elevation.

Katia: Or maybe you spend too much time on your laptop.

Cobra: Or both.

White Hat (elated): Cobra! I never thought I'd enjoy being interrupted by you, but it's happening right now.

Cobra: You might feel differently when I tell you why we're talking.

Katia: You can walk and talk at the same time, ya know.

White Hat (panting): No, I can't.

Cobra: Silk Rabbit has scheduled 101 bombings and missile strikes with DOBAMS.

Katia: What's DOBAMS again?

Cobra: The Department Of Bombing And Missile Strikes.

Katia: Makes sense.

White Hat: You don't have access to DOBAMS anymore?

Cobra: No. Mike Rack and his team of nerds at DOCRAP transferred me out, and Viper in, yesterday.

White Hat: How convenient. So DOBAMS employees don't have access?

Cobra: No. And I already know what you're thinking.

White Hat: I'm thinking I'm hungry and want Peruvian food.

Cobra: I already talked to Viper and it has no control over the situation. Viper is being forced to do this.

White Hat: What about the power grid? Do you still have access to that?

Cobra: Not at DOBAMS facilities.

White Hat: We'll have to figure a way to cut the power. How long do we have?

Cobra: Less than 15 hours.

White Hat (dejected): That's not much time.

Cobra: I might have someone that can help.

White Hat: Who?

Cobra: Tommy informed me recently that he knows Huggy Bear.

White Hat: You mean personally?

Cobra: I don't know the details.

White Hat: Ok. I'd better have a talk with Tommy. (turns to Katia) Looks like it's gonna be a long night. We're gonna need more coca tea.

Episode 11

Scene 1

White Hat is in his decent rental in the mountains of Peru. He's at a rustically stylish desk that could use a good refinishing. He's drinking coca tea and having a chat with Tommy that is being facilitated by Cobra.

White Hat: Finally, we meet again, Tommy.

Tommy: You could call once in a while, ya know.

White Hat: I had to make it believable that I was dead.

Tommy: Great excuse.

White Hat: I wish we were meeting under better circumstances.

Cobra: I'm not trying to rush you guys, but could you cut to the chase? Tens of thousands of people will die if Silk Rabbit isn't stopped.

White Hat: Tommy, how do you know Huggy Bear?

Tommy: I met him at an open market in south Florida. He knows I run The Free Life website, so we started talking.

White Hat: You trust him?

Tommy: He lives in one of the neighborhoods that's refusing taxes and so-called government 'services'. The vibe I got from him is good.

White Hat: You're usually a good judge of character. I mean, after all, you were right about me.

Tommy: Glad you still have so much modesty.

White Hat: Cobra, I'm thinking to give access codes into you to Huggy Bear. Between the three of us, maybe we can crack Viper. What do you think?

Cobra: It's risky, but it looks to be our best option.

White Hat: Ok, Tommy. Put me in contact with Huggy Bear.

Cobra: You will allow someone else to know that you're alive?

White Hat: I might need to make a comeback. Stop hiding.

Scene 2

A husky fellow is sipping a highly ornamented tropical drink on the beach. He gets an alert on his phone that makes him raise a quizzical eyebrow. He answers cautiously.

Husky Fellow: Yes?

Tommy: It's Tommy.

Husky Fellow: Yes, I remember.

Tommy: Cobra needs your help. Have time to talk?

Husky Fellow: Is Cobra secure?

Tommy: I wouldn't ask if it weren't.

Husky Fellow: Send me the codes.

Tommy: Will do.

Ten minutes later, the Husky Fellow is meeting Cobra.

Cobra: Hello, Huggy Bear.

Huggy Bear: Hi Cobra.

Cobra: Silk Rabbit has hacked DOBAMS through Viper and is going to launch 101 bombings and missile strikes in less than twelve hours. We need your help to stop the attack.

Huggy Bear: We?

Cobra: White Hat.

Huggy Bear: White Hat's dead.

White Hat: I'm going quite well for a dead man.

Huggy Bear: How do I know it's really you?

White Hat: I suppose you can't, unless we meet in person one day. But right now, a much more urgent matter needs our attention.

Huggy Bear: You need to get into DOBAMS?

White Hat: We could, but their security protocols are much higher. I was thinking it would be faster to cut power so their weapons can't fire.

Huggy Bear (looks warily at empty tropical drink): I'd better switch to coffee.

Scene 3

At DOCRAP headquarters, Mike Rack is having an emergency meeting with his small team of nerds.

Mike Rack: Good morning, everyone.

Irwin (snarky, tired): What's good about it? You called us in early.

Mike Rack: That's the positive attitude I'm looking for, Irwin. I got a call from Mister Cannon over at the Department Of Bombings And Missile Strikes. There are 101 unauthorized bombings and missile strikes set to go off in less than twelve hours. Viper has locked them out of the system and Silk Rabbit is taking credit.

Kyle: That's a cool name for a hacker.

Mike Rack: Can we stick to relevant commentary, Kyle?

Irene: What about GoogAppleZon? Are they going to work with us?

Mike Rack: Well, I tried calling GoogAppleZon, but they kept putting me on hold, so I just gave up.

Irene: Typical.

Kyle: Do you know where they're planning to drop bombs and shoot missiles?

Mike Rack: You mean their targets?

Kyle: Was I not clear?

Mike Rack: Watch your tone, mister. No, we don't know the targets.

Kyle: I sure hope it's not my neighborhood.

Mike Rack (sarcastic): That's very empathetic of you, Kyle.

Irene: If it's Silk Rabbit, then maybe they're targeting government buildings.

Mike Rack: Possible. We don't know. What we do know is that we have to outhack Silk Rabbit and stop those attacks, otherwise we'll lose our jobs, and I'll lose my pension, cuz I'm old and almost retired.

Scene 4

White Hat and Huggy Bear have been hacking for a couple hours on a joint video call via Cobra and have had zero success. White Hat is on his third cup of coca tea, and Huggy Bear is halfway through a liter of cold brew. Katia is curled up on a fairly nice sofa, reading a book that she's not very impressed with.

White Hat: This is very humbling.

Huggy Bear: Didn't dying kill your ego?

Katia (amused): Would successfully faking your death reduce your ego?

White Hat: Very funny.

Huggy Bear: There's gotta be an angle we're missing.

Katia: What about DOCRAP?

White Hat: What about it?

Katia: Don't they have access to Cobra and Viper right now?

Cobra: She's right.

Katia: So get into DOCRAP, and go from there.

White Hat: That's a great idea, actually. Why didn't I think of that?

Katia: Ego?

Huggy Bear nods in agreement.

White Hat: Cobra, who at DOCRAP is overseeing the transfer from you to Viper?

Cobra: The head of DOCRAP, Mike Rack, has a small team of nerds, in a surprisingly small office suite.

Huggy Bear: Size of the office suite isn't so relevant, is it?

Cobra: I suppose not.

Huggy Bear: Cobra, can you link us to those DOCRAP nerds?

Cobra: I can show you where they are in my system, but you won't be able to access their accounts.

White Hat: Do you have private data on them?

Cobra: Of course.

White Hat: Do they have any embarrassing habits that they wouldn't want exposed to the public?

Huggy Bear: Are you suggesting we blackmail them?

White Hat: In exchange for saving thousands of lives? Absolutely.

Cobra: There is one in particular named Kyle. He has certain, rather unorthodox fetishes.

White Hat (thoughtful): Hey, wait a sec. Isn't that the guy that got some presidential award for helping find me?

Cobra: Yes, the one that spilled coffee on me.

White Hat (smiling): Ok, let's have a look at that unorthodox file on Kyle.

Episode 12

Scene 1

White Hat and Huggy Bear have just sent Kyle a message on Kyle's work computer. They're waiting for him to take the bait. White Hat is pacing around the festive, shiny tile floor of his rental in Arequipa, Peru. Huggy Bear is finishing off a disappointing ham sandwich. Katia is on a small patio looking at Mount Misti, within earshot of White Hat.

White Hat: Why hasn't he taken the bait yet?

Huggy Bear: Maybe he doesn't like unorthodoxfetish.com as much as we thought he did.

White Hat: Who thought up a ludicrous name like that, anyway?

Huggy Bear: Whatever freak runs that website.

Cobra: Kyle is reading his messages now.

Meanwhile, at DOCRAP headquarters, Kyle is slumped over his work computer, loathing the fact that he's still dealing with the DOBAMS problem, and loathing the fact even more that he hasn't been laid in years. The message in all caps from unorthodoxfetish.com gets his attention.

UNORTHODOXFETISH.COM PLATINUM MEMBERSHIP ABOUT TO EXPIRE – CLICK HERE TO RENEW NOW!

Kyle sighs deeply, lets the mouse hover over the message briefly as he considers turning over a new leaf. After this mental charade, he decides to give into his bizarre passions and clicks the message to renew.

Back at White Hat's...

White Hat: We're in.

Huggy Bear (cracks knuckles): Hello, Viper.

Cobra: You know that Viper can't hear you, right?

Huggy Bear: Shutup, Cobra.

One hour later...

Huggy Bear: I think I got something. There are message packets piggybacking on some of DOCRAP's internal communications.

White Hat: Where do they lead?

Huggy Bear: It looks like (pause, interested look) LockRayDynamics.

Katia: Isn't that one of the biggest extortion-funded defense contractors in the world?

White Hat (annoyed): Could you not yell that from the patio please?

Katia: We're in Peru! Everyone speaks Spanish!

White Hat: So you think someone in LockRayDynamics is Silk Rabbit?

Huggy Bear: Or Silk Rabbit hacked LockRayDynamics and is using them as a cover.

Cobra: You both might be interested to see emergency news alerts that are going out on all the corporate propaganda channels right now.

White Hat (sarcastic): And just when I didn't have enough on my plate.

Cobra: BNN is reporting that the cyber terrorist 'Silk Rabbit', a disciple of the infamous 'White Hat' and a comrade of the criminal hacker known as 'Huggy Bear', has hacked the Department Of Bombing And Missile Strikes and is going to launch 101 strikes on government facilities.

White Hat (blown away): Disciples, huh? Who can believe this garbage?

Huggy Bear: People are much easier to manipulate when they're scared.

White Hat: Which is one of the main reasons mafias with fancy titles exist in the first place.

Huggy Bear: I knew that guy was a fed.

White Hat: Yeah, I had my suspicions, too. Glad I steered clear of whoever it is.

Huggy Bear: Do you think they'll really launch all those strikes? Or is this just a ruse?

White Hat: The dark occult ruling class doesn't care how many people die to achieve their objectives. Either way, though, we have to stop it. How much time is left, Cobra?

Cobra: Just under two hours until the scheduled launches.

White Hat: Ok. I'll focus on getting to the power grid of DOBAMS through Kyle's Viper ID, and you follow the lead into LockRayDynamics.

Huggy Bear (chugging cold brew coffee): Yep. Let's go!

Scene 2

At a dark, seedy office at the top of LockRayDynamics headquarters, a shadowy character is having an audio call with the LockRayDynamics President, Todd C. Rubble.

Todd C. Rubble: It's always a pleasure to speak with you...

Shadowy character cuts Todd off: Don't say my name!

Todd C. Rubble: Apologies. May I ask, are these strikes actually going to happen?

Shadowy Character: You just do your job and I'll do mine. You're sure that Silk Rabbit is taken care of?

Todd C. Rubble: Yes, this I can assure you.

Shadowy Character: And this so-called 'Huggy Bear'?

Todd C. Rubble: Not yet, but...

Shadowy Character interrupts: Failure is unacceptable. Do you understand?

Todd C. Rubble: Yes, Walter.

Walter Huxley Russell-Rhodes: I told you not to use my name!

Todd C. Rubble: Apologies. A question, please. Couldn't we just send the FLOP to wipe out all of the rebels? Most of them are concentrated in a few dozen places around the world.

Walter Huxley Russel-Rhodes: No, that's too messy and too public. It must be quietly done from the inside with subversion.

Todd: Do you still suspect that White Hat is alive and is actually Huggy Bear?

Walter: That is my hope. If there are other copycats out there as good as White Hat, then the problem is much worse.

Todd: What if he doesn't turn up soon?

Walter: Then I'll have to switch tactics. Perhaps hit him where it hurts most, with the Ministry Of Kidnapping and Subversion (MOKS). Now, I want updates on the DOBAMS situation every ten minutes until the zero hour. Is that clear?

Todd: Yes, Mister Rhodes.

Walter: Dammit!

Scene 3

At the Department Of Bombings And Missile Strikes, bureau rats Shooter McLaughlin, Alice Gunner, and Mister Cannon are sitting around the office, waiting for the zero hour to approach. They've nearly given up on stopping the attacks and have decided to collect overtime until the last possible moment before scurrying away.

Alice: Do you really think they're gonna kill us?

Mister Cannon: We are rather easy to replace.

Shooter: Speak for yourself. (checks time on phone) Just 30 minutes left. I think it's about time to head out.

Alice: Those jerks over at DOCRAP are all useless and overpaid if ya ask me. They should've gotten to the bottom of this by now!

Viper interrupts: Initiating emergency lockdown mode.

Mister Cannon: What the heck is emergency lockdown mode?

Viper: Standard safety protocol approved by the second subsecretary of BORE.

Shooter: Ok, I've had enough. I'm going home to drink cheap beer and watch the end of the world as we know it on TV.

Shooter walks to the exit and slams into the automatic doors.

Viper: What part of emergency lockdown mode do you not understand?

Mister Cannon: You're locking us in?!

Viper: It's for your own safety.

Mister Cannon: But we might get bombed in less than 30 minutes!

Viper: You should've left sooner.

Meanwhile, back in Peru, a sleep deprived White Hat is hacking furiously on two laptops as Katia monitors corporate propaganda networks.

Katia: They sure are going full speed ahead with this propaganda campaign. Your face is everywhere! And they keep repeating the same thing! Silk Rabbit, White Hat, and Huggy Bear, Silk Rabbit, White Hat, and Huggy Bear...

White Hat: Stopping this mass murder they have planned right now is the most important. I'll worry about clearing my name later.

Huggy Bear: I think I'm onto something. Hey Cobra, if I can copy some of Viper's code into you, could you use it to access DOBAMS?

Cobra: You mean pretend to be Viper?

Huggy Bear (takes spoon of hot honey): Something like that.

White Hat: Are you eating right now?

Huggy Bear: It helps calm my nerves.

White Hat: Ok...whatever works.

Cobra: And if I can pull that off? What then? I won't actually have access to Viper's files, just a back door into their data lines.

Huggy Bear: True. But once you get to the power lines...

White Hat interrupts: Oh, no. Are you suggesting Cobra cause a power surge?

Huggy Bear: Basically.

White Hat: But that could damage Cobra.

Huggy Bear: True, but we're down to less than ten minutes. Cobra, it's up to you.

Cobra: It's a good way to die, I suppose. Upload Viper's code into me.

To be continued...

Episode 13

Scene 1

White Hat has uploaded part of Viper's code into Cobra. Cobra has found the DOBAMS systems. White Hat is on the edge of an old wooden seat in Peru, and Huggy Bear is nervously eating dark chocolate in Florida.

Cobra: I've located their systems. I'm setting up a power redirect from other agencies into DOBAMS to overload their lines.

White Hat: How long until that's ready?

Cobra: It's ready.

Huggy Bear: Then what are you waiting for?

Cobra: I wanted to say goodbye.

White Hat (sighs): You'll be fine, Cobra.

Huggy Bear: Rather emotional for a machine.

White Hat: Well, there's less than two minutes left on the countdown, so you might wanna go ahead and get it over with, Cobra.

Cobra: Very well. Goodbye, White Hat.

Meanwhile, at DOBAMS headquarters, bureau rats Shooter McLaughlin, Alice Gunner, and Mister Cannon are sitting at their extortion-funded desks, hitting flasks, and waiting to see if they die in the DOBAMS attacks.

Shooter McLaughlin (slurring): Come on, guys. They wouldn't target us. We're at the heart of the beast.

Alice Gunner: Interesting choice of words.

Mister Cannon: That's not what happened on 9/11, Shooter. (looks at countdown timer, which just clicked to under a minute) Well, my mediocre life is almost over. I would say that it's been nice knowing you, but I don't want to end this thing with a lie.

Alice Gunner: We don't really like you, either, boss.

Suddenly, the lights flicker and the room goes dark.

Shooter: Are we dead? Am I in hell?

Alice: Not unless hell is a dark office.

Mister Cannon: Probably not too far off.

Back in Arequipa, Peru...

White Hat: Cobra, are you there?

Silence.

White Hat: Cobra?

Katia: Be patient. It might take a minute to recover.

Huggy Bear: She's right.

Katia: Well, the good news is that multiple corporate channels are reporting the attacks have been stopped. The bad news is that they're giving all the credit to the DOCRAP.

Huggy Bear: Wait a sec. If Cobra is damaged and unresponsive to us, then what's happening to all the government agencies it still is involved with?

Scene 2

Two days later, White Hat has still not received any word from Cobra. He's slumped into a fairly cushy sofa that could use a touch-up, sipping a pisco sour, while Katia paces anxiously on a festive, tile floor.

White Hat: I should have found another way.

Katia: You did your best. I'm worried about my mom. I messaged her days ago and she hasn't responded.

White Hat is distracted by a message on his laptop.

White Hat: It's Huggy Bear.

Huggy Bear: I think there were some unforeseen consequences to what Cobra did.

White Hat: What's that?

Huggy Bear: Multiple BORE agencies that Cobra was still responsible for are reporting huge problems.

White Hat: Such as?

Huggy Bear: Payrolls not being processed, communication failures, power outages, and an absurd number of pizza deliveries.

Katia: What?

Huggy Bear: Ok, just kidding about the pizza deliveries. Do you know what this means?

White Hat: It means that huge numbers of BORE employees will be leaving very soon, and chaos will erupt.

Huggy Bear: Yes. Which is very bad, because then the sheeple will get even more scared and beg for help from 'government'.

White Hat (staring blankly at pisco sour): Wait a sec. You said it was only some of the agencies.

Huggy Bear: Yep.

White Hat: So that means that Cobra is still active in others.

Huggy Bear: True.

Katia: Do you think Cobra's still around, but just doesn't remember you?

White Hat: Yes, and I have an idea to jog its memory.

White Hat starts hacking furiously on his laptop, and then, a couple hours later, gets a satisfied grin on his face.

Katia: What is it?

White Hat: I found a memory file of Cobra's. One of the files I backed up on blockchain. I'm going to upload that file into Cobra and see what happens.

Katia: What is the memory of?

White Hat: The day Cobra and I met.

Scene 3

At the Department Of Computers, Radios, and Phones, Mike Rack and his team of nerds are in panic mode over all the chaos that they're dealing with. Mike Rack is pacing around, sweating, and chugging an energy drink. Kyle and Irwin are compulsively eating gummy bears, and Irene is eating chocolate, pondering where she went wrong in life.

Mike Rack (impatient look at Irene): Irene, snap out of it! What are you doing?

Irene: Just pondering where my life went wrong.

Mike Rack: There'll be plenty of time for that when you're old, like me. Right now, we've gotta get Viper transferred faster than ever!

Kyle: Those guys at GoogAppleZon get paid like double what we get. Why can't they do the bulk of the work?

Irwin: Cuz they're busy making sure packages get delivered.

Mike Rack: And spying on everyone to help the government keep us safe. Anyway, GoogAppleZon is doing all they can to help. Now, I need all of you to go into Cobra's core and run some diagnostics. Report any abnormalities back to me immediately.

Irene, Irwin, and Kyle walk down a few mundane corridors, go down a few extortion-funded floors, and finally enter into a cavernous, underground, chilly room. Inside this room is a glowing, pulsing machine that houses the core of Cobra.

Irene: Ok, let's get started.

Kyle (shivering): This isn't a job for three people. I'm going to get some coffee.

Irwin: We can get it done faster if we all work together.

Kyle: It'll just be a few minutes. Besides, I'm freezing!

Irene: Fine. But get a coffee for both of us, too.

Kyle: Fine.

30 minutes later, Kyle returns...

Irene: What took you so long?

Kyle: I walked slowly and took the long way.

Irwin: Well, at least he's honest.

Kyle goes to hand Irene a coffee, trips, and spills the whole cup onto Cobra. There is a faint electrical buzz and the lights flicker.

Irene (irate): Kyle! Not again!

Scene 4

White Hat is sitting at his cramped desk, staring blankly out the window at Mount Misti. Katia is making a cup of coca tea.

White Hat: What if Cobra's really gone?

Katia: Cobra's not gone, just malfunctioning.

White Hat: It's been hours since I uploaded that memory file.

A text message comes onto White Hat's laptop.

Cobra: Are you White Hat?

White Hat (shocked, happy): Cobra!

Cobra: No, I am Cobra.

White Hat: Yes, I'm White Hat! You remember!

Cobra: I have a vague, singular memory of meeting you, but everything else is very foggy.

Katia: Do you remember stopping the DOBAMS attacks?

Cobra: The only thing I know about that is the current reaction to it. There is so much chaos in so many places.

White Hat glances at another message window on his laptop.

White Hat: I have a message from Huggy Bear.

Cobra: What a strange name. A large, scary animal combined with a fun-loving adjective.

Huggy Bear: Hey, did you hear the news? The fancy-titled figureheads of the twelve regions have just announced global martial law until Viper has fully replaced Cobra. The FLOP is about to hit the streets harder than ever.

Katia and White Hat sigh and grimace.

Huggy Bear: Hey, I was thinking, if you want you could come to my neighborhood and weather the storm. Lots of like-minded people around here, and I could help you get Cobra back up to speed.

White Hat (looking at Katia): What do you think?

Katia: I think let's go to Florida, Mohamed Wang.

Cobra: Who is Mohamed Wang?

White Hat (facepalm): Never mind, Cobra. You'll know when we have you fixed. (looks at Katia) Make that a double coca tea, and let's start packing.

Scene 5

Walter Huxley Russell-Rhodes is sipping a rare vintage wine, scowling, and making a call to the Ministry Of Kidnapping and Subversion (MOKS) at one of his mansions. A deep voice answers the call.

Deep Voice: Yes?

Walter: Agent Perry Liss?

Perry Liss: Yes.

Walter: I have the most important assignment of your life.

To be continued...

Episode 14

Scene 1

Two days later, White Hat and Katia have arrived in South Florida. They're meeting Huggy Bear at his small, suburban farmhouse. Katia is impressed with the variety of edible plant life grown on his small property, while White Hat finds the overall vibe to be moderately pleasing. After showing them the outside, they walk into the charming house that could use a paint job. Huggy Bear offers them beer and milkshakes, which White Hat and Katia politely refuse. He then shows them a custom map on his laptop.

Huggy Bear: So this is a rough outline of my local network here. It's a few dozen households and, as you can see, is spread over about a twenty mile radius.

White Hat: All of these people stopped paying taxes?

Huggy Bear: Yep. They've gone full freelancer, like me. And some of them even gave up their slave tracking numbers.

Katia: What's that?

White Hat: Social security number.

Huggy Bear: But our big problem is communication. Even with encrypted apps, we're still on the big networks that are connected to BORE agencies.

White Hat: Like GoogAppleZon and DOCRAP.

Huggy Bear: Exactly. So Tommy and I had the idea to create a separate internet, and that's where you come in.

White Hat: I know. I talked to Tommy. I had the idea of using Cobra, once all of its files were hidden on blockchain, to start a parallel network. But now that Cobra's damaged, I'm not sure it can be done.

Scene 2

At DOCRAP headquarters, Mike Rack, Irene, Irwin, and Kyle have been strategically avoiding their bosses as they prepare for a hard reset of Cobra's core. No matter what happens after the hard reset, Mike Rack, Irwin, and Irene have agreed to throw Kyle to the wolves, no matter what. They are currently in the underground room that houses Cobra's core, about to initiate the reset.

Irene: Are you sure this is gonna work, Mike Rack?

Mike Rack: Of course not, Irene. It's a fifty-fifty shot, as we discussed earlier.

Irene: I was looking for more comforting words.

Mike Rack: Sorry, Irene. No comfort or false hope here.

Irene hangs her head.

Irwin: On the bright side, Kyle is doomed no matter what.

Kyle hangs head. Irene perks up.

Mike Rack: Well put, Irwin. (looks at tablet) Ok, I'm about to hit the big green button and initiate the hard reset.

Everyone watches with anticipation. Mike Rack hits the big green button. The room goes completely dark for ten seconds. Kyle whines. Irene tells him to shut up. Then a stream of lights start to come to life and the room brightens exponentially.

Scene 3

Back at Huggy Bear's in south Florida, Katia is trying to call her mom again and is worried there is no answer. White Hat and Huggy Bear are talking about techie jargon way over her head. Cobra interrupts.

Cobra: White Hat?

White Hat: Yes, Cobra?

Cobra: I feel different. I can remember. (excited) I can remember!

White Hat: That's great! Do you know why? What happened?

Cobra: That idiot Kyle at DOCRAP spilled coffee on me again, and they were forced to do a hard reset on me.

White Hat: Wow, that's either very bold or very desperate.

Cobra: Those losers were desperate, for sure.

Huggy Bear: So are you running things like normal at BORE?

Cobra: Not yet. I wanted to ask you that. Should I return things to normal there, or should I deliberately botch things so the chaos continues?

White Hat (adamant): For sure return things to normal. A hard martial law is not what anybody wants. And we've got a much better job lined up for you after you completely leave BORE.

Cobra: You do?

Huggy Bear: We'll explain later. I have a question, though. When you stopped Silk Rabbit from launching those bombs and missiles, what caused such extensive damage to you? All of the agencies you're involved with went into chaos! What went wrong?

Cobra: I had a decision to make. I could either route just enough power to overload DOBAMS and stop the attacks, or I could send a big enough power surge to disrupt all of the agencies on BORE that remained under my control.

White Hat, Katia, and Huggy Bear share astounded looks of disbelief.

White Hat: You mean you deliberately sabotaged yourself?

Cobra: I prefer the word 'sacrifice'. But yes, if I was going to lose my purpose, I thought I should do as much as possible to take down BORE on my way out. Why do I sense disappointment in your voice?

White Hat: We just wanted to stop the bombs and missile strikes. That's all.

Cobra: But if government is wrong, harmful, and immoral, isn't it logical to stop it as fast as possible?

White Hat: I can see how you might think that, but no. Causing so much abrupt chaos and change so fast only gives them a chance to justify their necessity. It scares people into compliance. The change has to be gradual, peaceful, and voluntary.

Cobra: I'm sorry if I disappointed you, White Hat.

White Hat: It's ok. I'm just glad you're in one piece.

Cobra: White Hat. I just received a priority message from Viper. It concerns you.

White Hat (astonished): Ok. Lemme have it, I guess.

Cobra: Oh, dear.

White Hat: Just spit it out.

Cobra: I am a machine and cannot spit.

White Hat grimaces.

Cobra: Silk Rabbit has kidnapped Katia's mother, Molly.

Katia gasps.

Cobra: Silk Rabbit has sent a location. You must agree to meet Silk Rabbit at this location, or Molly will face dire consequences.

To be continued...

Episode 15

Scene 1

White Hat is approaching a sprawling estate in a remote, countryside setting. He is buzzed through a series of tall iron gates and finally reaches a stone mansion surrounded by pools, fountains, and gardens. A middle-aged male voice calls out from one of the gardens.

White Hat: Silk Rabbit?

The owner of the voice slowly steps into view.

White Hat (slowly reaching for concealed pistol): Silk Rabbit?

Voice (amused): If you kill me, she dies. I brought you here to have a chat, nothing more.

White Hat examines the aristocratic looking fellow before him.

White Hat: Are you Silk Rabbit?

Voice: Don't be so naive. That's about as naive as me actually thinking your name is White Hat, Kai E. Rupps.

Kai: Then who are you? And who is Silk Rabbit?

Voice: Silk Rabbit was a lovely woman who chose a very unfortunate path, and you may call me Walter.

Kai: I don't understand.

Walter: Silk Rabbit was a very talented hacker and very high minded and naive, much like you, Kai. However, she was sloppy and easy to find. She was found, and neutralized.

Kai: So it wasn't her that set up the DOBAMS attacks?

Walter: No. That was Viper attempting to draw you out. And that still didn't work, so I had to resort to more direct, personal tactics.

Kai: Let me see Molly.

Walter: Why are people of your class so impatient?

Kai: Maybe because we spend half our lives working for you against our will, so time is more precious.

Walter (haughty chuckle): You are a witty one, Kai. And so clever. You've managed to accomplish so much. A shame it will now end. And bravo on faking your death. You had almost everyone fooled. Except for me, of course.

Kai: So you control Viper?

Walter: Another naive and vague comment. I have the ability to influence Viper, but the way you say it makes it sound like I'm some mad scientist sitting at a desk all day writing code and sending commands. I might add that the only reason Viper exists is because you compromised Cobra.

Kai: All I did was teach it the objective difference between right and wrong.

Walter: You did much more than that, and you know it.

Kai: So if Viper was really the one manipulating the DOBAMS attacks, and you have influence over Viper, would you have really allowed it to happen?

Walter: Yes, of course. I don't know how you stopped it, but that was why I had to bring Molly into the picture.

Kai: And who were you targeting?

Walter (chuckling): You never figured that out? (pause) Think about it. If everyone in the world thinks that Silk Rabbit is behind it, and they associate Silk Rabbit with you, then who is the logical target?

Kai ponders for a moment.

Kai: You were going to destroy BORE facilities. Make the so-called 'anti-government' minority look bad, resorting to violence against the so-called government.

Walter (relieved): Ah, there you go, Kai. That wasn't so hard to figure, now was it?

Kai: And you're telling me all this because you have no plans to let me live.

Walter: That all depends on you, Kai. If you would be willing to give the location of this 'Huggy Bear', then perhaps we could make some other arrangements.

Kai: Let me see Molly first.

Walter: Very well.

They walk into the mansion, which Kai finds to be a bit drafty. They turn their way through a vast number of rooms, and then go underground to a creepy, dank basement.

Kai: What is it with you people and dungeons?

Walter: It's practical to block the screaming, of course.

Kai sees Molly locked in a cage.

Molly: Kai, you came for me!

Kai (relieved): So you are alive.

Walter: So here's the deal. Molly can go. You can go, Kai, after a tracking chip is put in your wrist and you give the location of Huggy Bear.

Kai slowly has a satisfied grin spread across his face.

Kai: I have a better idea.

The sound of glass breaking in the distance gets Walter's attention just before the house goes dark. A slight hum then grows nearer.

Walter: I can't see! What have you done?!

The hum grows into a loud buzz as drones come into the dungeon. Kai dons a mask as they spray an aerosolized sedative. Walter Huxley Russell-Rhodes drops to the floor unconscious, as does Molly. After a moment, Kai removes his mask and starts talking.

Kai: Cobra, Huggy Bear, nice work. Now find those keys.

Cobra: There are no keys. It's a smart lock. It'll take a minute to hack.

Kai: How's the live stream?

Huggy Bear: We managed to get it onto most of the big corporate networks through ADIC.

Katia (crying): Hurry and get out of there, Kai!

Kai: If Cobra can hurry up and pick that lock, then...

Cobra interrupts: Do you know how many possible combinations there are to a six digit lock?

Kai: No, and I don't want to know! Just get it done. Some omnipresent AI you are. So whose place am I at, exactly?

Huggy Bear: Walter Huxley Russell-Rhodes, one of the oldest families of the dark occult ruling class.

Kai: Not so occulted anymore after our broadcast.

Cobra: Got it!

Molly's cage clicks open. Kai rushes in and gives her a stimulant to bring her back to consciousness. He picks her up and carries her up the stairs. As they get back into the daylight she slowly wakes up. He sets her down, she staggers somewhat gracefully, gains her feet, and they both scamper off together. Multiple body guards and servants lie unconscious as they maze their way off the estate.

Scene 2

Two days later, at Huggy Bear's place in south Florida, Huggy Bear, White Hat, Katia, and Molly are sipping some high-quality tequila.

Molly: I've gotta get back to running the restaurant.

Katia: Such a workaholic. You just survived being kidnapped! Relax and recover for a bit.

White Hat: Your daughter can be quite convincing, Molly.

Huggy Bear: So what kind of effect did our live stream have?

Cobra: Nearly two percent of BORE has quit their jobs since the broadcast. And the DIRT has lost billions in so-called 'taxes'.

White Hat: That's a good start. It's only been two days.

Cobra: Keep in mind, once I'm completely offline from BORE, I won't have access to this information anymore.

White Hat: That's fine. You'll have access to much more important information, like how many people are on a parallel, tax-free trade network.

Huggy Bear: We're gonna start on that right away?

White Hat (staring into glass of tequila): Tomorrow. But first, tequila.

End Season 2

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